

a plurality of connecting pipes through which refrigerant can separately flow, each of said connecting pipes having one end portion firmly fixed to said communication port in a state of being fitted to said communication port and another end portion firmly fixed to one of the plurality of refrigerant pipes having different outer diameters of the multi-unit type air conditioner, said firmly fixing operation being performable at an installation site of the multi-unit type air conditioner in which another end portion is fitted to the one of the refrigerant pipes; and

a common communication port through which the refrigerant can flow in a confluent state, said common communication port being provided in said branch pipe joint body;

wherein said plurality of connecting pipes each has one end portion fitted to one of said communication ports and another end portion fitted to one of said refrigerant pipes having different outer diameters, each of the one end portions having the same outer diameter, while at least some of the another end portions have inner diameters different from each other.

20. (New) A branch pipe joint for refrigerant pipes of a multi-unit type air conditioner, according to Claim 19, wherein said connecting pipes are firmly fixed by welding.

21. (New) A branch pipe joint for refrigerant pipes of a multi-unit type air conditioner, according to Claim 19, wherein said connecting pipes are firmly fixed by brazing.

22. (New) A branch pipe joint for refrigerant pipes of a multi-unit type air conditioner, according to Claim 19, wherein said branch pipe joint body is formed with a Y-shape having two branched portions and one root portion, and two communication ports are

formed to said two branched portions while one common communication port is formed to said one root portion.

23. (New) A branch pipe joint for refrigerant pipes of a multi-unit type air conditioner, according to one of Claims 19 and 22, wherein a part of said communication ports is directly firmly fixed to a part of said refrigerant pipes without using the connecting pipes.

24. (New) A method of connecting refrigerant pipes of a multi-unit type air conditioner, the method comprising the steps of:

preparing a branch pipe joint body having a hollow shape and a plurality of communication ports each having the same inner diameter;

selecting connecting pipes from a group of connecting pipes at an installation site of the multi-unit type air conditioner, each of the selected connecting pipes having one end portion having an outer diameter enabling the one end portion to be fitted to said communication ports and another end portion having an inner diameter enabling the another end portion to be fitted to one of the plurality of the refrigerant pipes having different outer diameters, said group of connecting pipes and said branch pipe joint body having been packed in one package; and

connecting said branch pipe joint body to said refrigerant pipes through the selected connecting pipes using firm fixing,

wherein the number of said connecting pipes in said group of connecting pipes is larger than the number of said communication ports, and is set such that a total number of the connecting pipes having a minimum inner diameter and a maximum inner diameter is smaller than a number of the connecting pipes having an inner diameters other than the minimum and maximum inner diameters.

25. (New) A branch pipe joint for refrigerant pipes of a multi-unit type air conditioner, according to Claim 24, wherein said connecting pipes are firmly fixed by welding.

26. (New) A branch pipe joint for refrigerant pipes of a multi-unit type air conditioner, according to Claim 24, wherein said connecting pipes are firmly fixed by brazing.

27. (New) A method of connecting refrigerant pipes of a multi-unit type air conditioner according to Claim 24, wherein said branch pipe joint body provides a Y-shape having two branched portions and one root portion, and two communication ports are formed to said two branched portions while one common communication port is formed to said one root portion.

28. (New) A method of connecting refrigerant pipes of a multi-unit type air conditioner according to one of Claim 24, wherein some of said communication ports are directly firmly fixed to some of said refrigerant pipes without using the connecting pipes.

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-18 have been cancelled. New Claims 19-28 have been introduced.

Claim 19 includes features of original Claims 1 and 12, and further recites the feature of the communication ports "having the same inner diameter," is clearly shown in FIG. 4 and substantially described in the originally filed specification at page 4, lines 22-26. The feature of the connecting pipes being firmly fixed is described in the specification at page 11, lines 24-25.